



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 20, 2003

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Meribeth McCarrick at (202) 418-0654

FCC OPENS INQUIRY TO STUDY THE IMPACT COMMUNICATIONS TOWERS MAY HAVE ON MIGRATORY BIRDS

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission has adopted a Notice of Inquiry (NOI) to gather comment and information on the impact that communications towers may have on migratory birds. One of the FCC’s critical responsibilities is to manage the expansion of communications towers in a way that best preserves the country’s environmental resources. This inquiry is part of the Commission’s environmental and historic preservation action plan announced by Chairman Powell in May 2003. The adopted NOI is one of many continuing efforts to protect environmental resources while at the same time accelerating the deployment of communications infrastructure that is critical to the rapid rollout of advanced communications services, as well as for public safety and homeland security.

Background

Communications towers and other structures that support antennas provide the infrastructure for services licensed by the Commission, including broadcast television and radio, cellular, Personal Communications Service, Specialized Mobile Radio, and other advanced and emerging services. Communications towers also are used for the provision of private radio services used by business and government, and for public safety purposes.

Migratory birds breed throughout the United States and Canada and, in the fall of each year, migrate to the southern United States, Mexico, and Central and South America for the winter. To the Commission’s knowledge, to date there have been no studies sufficient to support a reliable estimate of the number of migratory birds that may have died as a result of collisions with an extensive number of communications towers located, for example, over wide geographic areas. In addition, while some literature suggests that certain factors – such as tower height, lighting systems, type of antenna support structure, and location – may increase or decrease the hazards that towers pose to migratory birds, there does not appear to be systematic research on an adequate scale regarding exactly how and to what extent, if at all, these factors contribute to any risk to migratory birds.

Specifics of the NOI

This inquiry is designed to gather comment and information on scientific research and other related data relevant to migratory bird collisions with communications towers. The NOI generally seeks the following:

- Information, supported by evidence, concerning the number of migratory bird collisions with communications towers and the role that specific factors associated with communications towers may have in increasing or decreasing the incidence of such collisions. Such factors may include lighting, height, and particular type of antenna structure, meteorological conditions, location, physiographic features of sites, and known migratory bird migration corridors.

- Information on whether any current or proposed research may provide useful data regarding the subjects of this inquiry, and what other actions may be necessary to spur additional, necessary research.
- Comment on whether certain measures might minimize any adverse impacts of communications tower siting and construction on migratory birds, whether any such measures are supported by adequate and reliable empirical and/or scientific evidence, and how the use of such measures may affect the ability of licensees and other parties to provide efficient and reliable communications services.

Certain migratory bird species may hold particular cultural or religious significance to Indian Tribes. The Commission has made a commitment to consult with federally recognized Indian tribes to the extent practical prior to implementing any regulatory action or policy that will significantly or uniquely affect Tribal governments, their land and resources. Consistent with that commitment, the NOI requests comments from the Tribes and other parties on whether any of the questions raised in this inquiry will significantly impact Tribal governments, their land, and resources.

Depending on the record developed in this proceeding, the Commission will consider whether the current state of research would support further action by the Commission in this area, including possible amendments of its environmental rules.

Action by the Commission on August 8, 2003 by Notice of Inquiry (FCC 03-205). Chairman Powell, Abernathy, Copps, Adelstein and Martin with Chairman Powell and Commission Adelstein issuing separate statements.

FCC Contact: Bill Stafford at (202) 418-0563 or e-mail Bill.Stafford@fcc.gov

WT Docket No. 03 - 187

- FCC -